

# Teens face tough economic summer



Tuesday April 29, 2008

NEW YORK (AP)

Albertsons supermarket said "no," and so did Macy's department store and a local grocer.

But 16-year-old Lila Woloshin hasn't given up on getting a summer job. Now she's working on an application for part-time work at the local Petco animal shop.

"Very few of my friends have jobs yet," Woloshin said. "I think it's tougher because, with the economic decline, people are trying to make do with the employees they have."

Like many of the nation's high school students, Woloshin is finding summer jobs are scarcer this year as the U.S. economy slows amid rising oil prices, the housing crunch and tight credit market conditions.

The downturn means teens may find themselves competing with unemployed adult jobseekers at a time businesses are trying to hold down costs.

Still, experts say kids will find both paying and volunteer work this summer -- but it may require more persistence than in recent years.

Jim Taylor, vice chairman of the Harrison Group, a market research firm based in Waterbury, Connecticut, points out that there are many jobs earmarked for teens, especially in enterprises that draw teen patrons. These include summer recreation programs, youth services, fast food restaurants and stores that sell kid-friendly fashion.

And teens have shown a strong desire to work, he added. The Harrison Group's latest survey found that 46 percent of teenagers have jobs, and they typically put in more than 14 hours a week and take home an average of \$474 a month to save for college, invest in electronics or spend on entertainment.

Teens not yet employed or who want to increase their hours will have to do some legwork, Taylor said.

His advice: "Go out and get a real, grown-up set of shoes. Get rid of the rings -- nose rings and other stuff. March up and down the mall with a really good resume. Walk into every store -- every store -- and say, 'I'm looking for summer work.' And you'll get a job."

The earlier teens start looking, the better, he added, because "if you wait too long, the jobs will be gone."

Peter Handal, chairman, president and chief executive of Dale Carnegie Training in Hauppauge, New York, said young people who want summer work should maintain a positive attitude in their job searches.

"Companies still are hiring, so there will be opportunities," he said.

Handal suggests teens make sure their resumes are as strong as possible.

"It should be succinct, clear -- and proofread carefully, because you don't want to have spelling or grammar mistakes," he said.

Handal also suggests teens network with friends and family, "who can introduce job possibilities you hadn't thought of."

For Lila Woloshin, a high school sophomore, getting a job is about having money to save and to spend, including funds to go to the movies and hang out with friends.

Her mother, Mara Woloshin, who owns a public relations agency and is an adjunct professor at the University of Portland in Oregon, believes teenagers invest so many hours on Web sites such as Facebook and MySpace that they need a nudge toward the real world.

"What's more real than working a job?" she asked. "What's more real than the reality of dollars and cents, and getting to a place where expectations are not set by your parents but are set by the world at large. ... I can't think of a better way to educate a young person."

John Ferrell, president of the YMCA of Greater Boston, is a big employer of teen workers each summer, many of whom help at day camps and other programs the Y sponsors. The Boston Y hires more than 500 teens each year and takes on an additional 200 to 300 teen workers who are paid by city youth employment programs.

"Sure, teens need spending money," Ferrell said. "But employment helps them develop a sense of responsibility, a sense of work ethic. It's part of becoming an adult, and we think it's important for us to contribute to that process."

One teen who will benefit is Nicole Horan, 17, who will spend her second consecutive summer as a camp counselor, supervising kids ages 5 to 12 who participate in swimming, archery and arts and crafts programs. She attended the same camp as a child.

"The job is important because it's spending money for me," Horan said. "It's money to use when I'm going out with friends, out to eat or shopping."

But, she said of her job, "I also have a lot of fun."

Horan, a junior in high school who is considering a career in child psychology, said some of her friends who have been job hunting have been turned away by employers looking for older, more permanent workers.

"I have friends who have been looking and can't find anything," she said. "They're trying, but they can't find anything."